WATER SPORTS; or insignificant white boys

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a memory play,
a piss play,
a book of poetry

By Jeremy O. Harris

Represented by:

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Setting:
A Large Home in Sliverlake, California // Jeremy's mind

Time:
July 05, 2015 // or never // or always

Characters:

Robert Mapplethorpe: Photographer // Fetishist. (WHITE IRL, but) Non-Black here.

James Baldwin: Author // Fetishized. Black.

Jeremy: Playwright // Fetishist. Black.

His Friend: A performer. White.

Black Muse

White Muse

Structure:
Water Sports, Defined (White Muse, Black Muse)
Introduction (Jeremy, His Friend)
Writing/Studio Session #1 (James and Robert)
Writing Session #2 (James and Jeremy)
Writing Session #3 (James alone)
Writing Session #4 (James and White Muse)
BRUNCH
Writing Session #5 (James and His Friend)
Writing Session #6(James alone)
Writing Session #7(James and Black Muse)
Conclusion

Studio Session #2 (Robert and His Friend)
Studio Session #3 (Robert alone)
Studio Session #4 (Robert and Black Muse)

Studio Session #5 (Robert and Jeremy)
Studio Session #6 (Robert alone)
Studio Session #7 (Robert and White Muse)

Notes:

This piece is immersive and works best when the play can flow out over a large space.

Every non-white, non-male audience member has the option to be a masked "insignificant white boy" if they so choose. White men do not get the option of anonymity.

When they are not in either James or Robert's studios the muses read poems from "insignificant white boys" to Jeremy as His Friend watches.

WATER SPORTS, DEFINED

Black Muse and White Muse stand at attention. They are blank, empty vessels. The audience greets them in small groups of 5-10.

BLACK MUSE

A History With Water Sports:

WHITE MUSE

The first time I engaged in water sports I was in high school.
I was very frightened
because my family had always told me that they were not for us.
But, a friend, Ayla, told me that water sports were the best way to make friends in my new town.
So
I joined the swim team.

BLACK MUSE

I was not very good at swimming,
less than mediocre at free
less than mediocre at back
I excelled at breast,
lots of leg,
but fly confounded me.

WHITE MUSE

I loved to dive tho.
I could fall without any hesitation
or fear.
I think because I liked to dance a bit in the sky.

BLACK MUSE

When I moved to Los Angeles,
I avoided:

surfing,

boogie boarding,

paddle boarding,

wake boarding,

jet skiing,

kayaking,

fishing.

I don't like to be outside.

WHITE MUSE

I'm bougie.
I prefer yachting
and sailing.
Although I've only done both a handful of times.

BLACK MUSE

According to Hal Fischer's
Gay Semiotics,
a photographic study of visual coding among homosexual men,
(a book from the 1970s)
a handkerchief could be used as a signifier for behavior that is "deviant" or "abnormal".
A handkerchief worn in the right hip pocket, denotes the wearer takes the passive role.
A handkerchief worn in the left hip pocket, denotes the wearer takes the aggressive role.

WHITE MUSE

Colors helped to further signify and communicate the wearer's desires:
Black denoted heavy SM.
White denoted vanilla, an invitation for masturbation.
Brown denoted scat, poo.
Green invited sex work or sought a john.
Red was for fist fucking.
White lace was for white bottoms.
Black with white stripes for black bottoms.

Black muse turns around. He poses like the man from the cover of GAY SEMIOTICS. There is a yellow handkerchief in his left back pocket.

BLACK MUSE

And yellow was for piss play.
Is for piss play.
A water sport.

WHITE MUSE

When I was 19
I decided to write my first play on deviant black men.
It was called, "The 10th or Clover St.'s Boys".
It was about 5 black male sex workers,
and inspired by Sweet Sweetback's Badasssssssssss Song.

BLACK MUSE

Needing a reference for black deviance
I went to Facet's Videothéque in Chicago
where Lew, the manager, told me I should watch Bruce La Bruce's
1996 film Hustler White.
The film featured images I hadn't even imagined were erotic
like an amputee slowly fucking another man with his amputated leg
Or a man in blue jeans
staring at the camera with a semi erect penis throbbing from his crotch
who slowly begins to piss himself.

WHITE MUSE

I've never been so hard during a film.
Yet still, I felt, my family's thoughts were true...
water sports weren't f or us.
Which was fine,
because a lot of other things weren't either.

BLACK MUSE begins to recite **STANISLAV: 1** as WHITE MUSE accompanies on a stringed instrument. They lead the audience to Jeremy and His Friend.

END OF WATER SPORTS, DEFINED.

AN INTRODUCTION

Jeremy and His Friend stand at attention. Smiling, as an audience files into the space.

JEREMY

Welcome.

HIS FRIEND

Welcome.

JEREMY

My name is Jeremy.

HIS FRIEND

And I'm his friend.

JEREMY

Welcome!

HIS FRIEND

Welcome!

JEREMY

This is the story of James Baldwin.

HIS FRIEND

This is the story of Robert Mapplethorpe.

JEREMY

And a brunch they hosted
in the neighborhood of Silverlake,
In Los Angeles,
California,
the summer of 2016.

HIS FRIEND

July 05, 2016 to be exact.

Jeremy looks at His Friend.

JEREMY

This story is fiction.

HIS FRIEND

This story is not fiction.

Jeremy

This story is an exploration,
an attempt at a type of decolonization/ of my.

HIS FRIEND

/Decoloni-what?

JEREMY

Desires.
Dude.
What're you doing?

HIS FRIEND

What do you mean what am I doing?

JEREMY

You're being super passive aggressive.

HIS FRIEND

I'm being super passive aggressive?

JEREMY

Yes.
You are.

HIS FRIEND

You wrote me into a book of poetry called,
Insignificant White Boys.

JEREMY

Ok...

HIS FRIEND

You're writing about
the time--

JEREMY

Ok!

…

The play will take place over the entirety of the space.
Things might get wet,
so watch your step.

HIS FRIEND

If you were given a copy of "Insignificant White Boys"
that has a black cover you should begin by following Jeremy throughout his journey.

JEREMY

If you were given a copy of "Insignificant White Boys"
that has a white cover you should begin by following my friend throughout his journey.

Jeremy and His Friend lead audience into Robert's studio. Where he and James are in the middle of an early morning photo session:

STUDIO SESSION #1
WRITING SESSION #1

They are in Robert's studio.

In the corner of the room a large shower curtain obscures his shower. Around the room we see photo after photo after photo of James in different poses.

They litter the walls and the floor and some are even hanging to dry from the ceiling. The room is red. And plastic carpets the floor.

Robert places James in a pose.

Robert snaps with his iPhone

He places James in another pose

and snaps

He readjusts James in some other pose

and snaps.

This should be going on before the audience even arrives. It should be improvisational without being performative.

We've stumbled into the early morning flirtations of two artists.

JAMES

I'm done.

ROBERT

No,
not yet,
don't move.
Just,
just tilt your head a bit like that.

JAMES

Like what?

ROBERT

Don't smile.

JAMES

I never smile.

ROBERT

All the same…
Don't.

Robert continues to take pictures. Snapping away.

JAMES

(moving out of his pose)

Bob I need to start making brunch
they'll arrive any moment now.

ROBERT

Wait wait wait.
Don't move.
Stay just like that.
God,
you pose as you move.
…
Take off your shirt.

JAMES

Bob…

ROBERT

Jimmy...
...
...
...
take off your shirt.

Robert reaches over, iPhone in one hand, and unbuttons James' shirt.

He snaps a picture.

He snaps another.

He snaps another.

He snaps another.

ROBERT

Now...
just ever so slowly bend down.

JAMES

Bob.

ROBERT

Bend down.
Please?
(he flashes a smile)
Pretty please?

James begins to bend down.

ROBERT

Oh that's so nice.
See?
Like that.

James begins to enjoy it a bit.

ROBERT

Now…
straighten your back.
…
…
That's it.
Regal, like a king.
Ah, you're so fucking beautiful.

JAMES

(moving from the pose)

Then kiss me.

ROBERT

NO!
God.
Stay.
It's not time for that, yet.
…
…
I'm sorry.
I just can't stop looking at you.
I don't want to stop looking at you.
Your body reveals something new to me every time.

JAMES

Bob.
…
…
You only look at me through that thing.

ROBERT

What?

JAMES

You only look at me through that thing.
…
What do you see?

ROBERT

You.

James picks his shirt back up and puts it back on

Robert reaches for his pants and begins to unbutton them.

JAMES

And how do I look?

Robert pulls down James' underwear, Calvin Klein's, and snaps a picture of his flaccid penis.

ROBERT

Perfect.

James zips up his pants.

JAMES

Ok...
It's my turn now.

ROBERT

Your turn for what?

JAMES

To do some work.

ROBERT

Ok.

Robert sits down as though about to be interviewed. This is familiar.

JAMES

Ok.

James pulls a pen from his binder and begins to write on his script.

JAMES

Do you trust my beauty is seen by your eyes?

ROBERT

...
yes?
I'm not sure I understand.

James scribbles some things down.

JAMES

Do you trust my beauty is seen by your eyes?
And not just by that thing.
But by you, your eyes.

ROBERT

Yes.

JAMES

What do I look like?

ROBERT

Perfection.

JAMES

(he smiles)

Lies.

He scribbles more things down.

ROBERT

What're you writing?

JAMES

When you look at yourself what do you see?

ROBERT

Me.

James looks up from scribbling.

JAMES

Ah.

ROBERT

What?
I see myself.

James writes some things down.

JAMES

"I see myself"
That's good.
I like that
"I see myself"

(he reaches down pecks Robert on the forehead)

Time for brunch, no?
...
....
"I see myself"

James gets up repeating, "I see myself" as he exits.

Jeremy follows him out.

END OF SESSION #1

STUDIO SESSION #2

Robert is alone, except for His Friend who stands opposite him, observing.

Robert smiles and walks over to the shower and stands beneath the water, as soon as it hits his head it is like fire, burning his hair, burning his face, burning that inner part of him he keeps hidden.

HE SCREAMS!!!!

Later, much later.

And perhaps with a British accent:

ROBERT

The thing about his dick,
that dick
black dick
is that it came close to perfection.
It felt like a dick I had dreamed up
drawn down
because it was shaped like
California.
Long but not obscene
and thick as though waiting to be embraced by a fist?
And it wasn't just shaped like California
it tasted like it too.
You know how a lot of dick can taste game-y?

Like in your mouth it tastes of something
like…
Ok when I was growing up in London,
(I mean Queens)
we lived on Marleybone High Street
and just across the street from our house there was this delicious French restaurant
Called Orrery
and Orrery is sort of renowned for their pork belly
it's one of their signature dishes
And this is one of the things I GREW UP eating
Bcause my mother wasn't a chef.
So we'd always go there.
Anyway, for my mother's birthday one year
I decided to get MAKE her the pork belly
so I went down to the market and I got some pork
and I took out my mother's dusty Julia Child's and
SLAVED over this meal for three full hours
did everything EXACTLY like the French would.
When I presented to my mother she was so excited by my presentation.
"It looks just like it Bobby!"
but then as we sat down to eat it
her smile faded
her face turned sour
"This doesn't taste of France at all.
This tastes of Sheffield."
then she spit it out.
Most American dick tastes game-y,
of the Midwest.
His dick tastes of California
A fusion dish:
salty, spicy, and dry
like wine.
Dry like California.
And my mouth can be a lake that'll never dry out.
Droughtless hole for his dick fall disappear into.

The thing about his dick
that dick
black dick is that it's the only black thing I'd ever let kill me.
We dance right up to my death every time I let it in my mouth.

That's why I'm always crying whenever I'm on my knees.
Not out of sadness
or even glee
moreso just as a recognition that this might be the end
and tears always look good with a goodbye.

Not knowing what to do, His Friend begins to clap.

Robert looks up and over.

HIS FRIEND

Hi.

ROBERT

Hello...
what's your name?

HIS FRIEND

Um...
I'm his friend.

ROBERT

You're early.

HIS FRIEND

We live right up the street,
around the corner.

ROBERT

Ah.

HIS FRIEND

Yeah...

ROBERT

What do you do?

HIS FRIEND

Oh I'm an actor.

ROBERT

Really?
Me too.

HIS FRIEND

You're a photographer though.

ROBERT

It's the same thing.
You're beautiful

HIS FRIEND

Thank you.

Robert begins to take His Friends picture. Not bothering with posing him.

HIS FRIEND

You know...
He thinks I'm like, you,
or something.

Robert continues to take his photograph.

ROBERT

Who,
James?

HIS FRIEND

Both.

ROBERT

Why do you think that is...

HIS FRIEND

I don't know.
It's like a metaphor or something...
...
...
Maybe because he's put so much in both of our mouths
he feels there's some sort of kinship.

ROBERT

I pity James.
I love him.
But I pity him.
He still imagines that passivity is weakness.
That dominance is power.

His Friend begins to laugh.

Robert stops taking his picture.

ROBERT

What?

HIS FRIEND

I said the same thing to Jeremy.

ROBERT

…
He's getting off on this.

HIS FRIEND

Who,
James?

ROBERT

Both.

HIS FRIEND

Huh.

ROBERT

He likes getting inside our head.
Imagining all the horrors we say
think
when they're not around.

HIS FRIEND

Like what?

ROBERT

Like "nigger"
he imagines I live to say the word.
"Nigger"

HIS FRIEND

Can you not say that?

ROBERT

"Nigger"?

HIS FRIEND

Stop.

ROBERT

Nigga.

HIS FRIEND

Stop.

ROBERT

You know James told me
that he never really knew he was black
never felt it
until he 16 years old.
He had just come back from France
(the first time)
and he was back home in Virginia
(I mean Harlem…)
and
He borrowed a friends car
and drove with them to a music festival
in the mountains
the Blue Ridge.
There they stopped for gas
He was with 3 white girls
and when he went to pay for the gas
he said the man looked at him and said
"get one of them heifers to bring it in here
I don't accept money from niggers. "

...
....
ISN'T THAT WILD???

HE LAUGHS.

HIS FRIEND

Kiss me?

Robert looks at him a moment...then he does.

His Friend moans and it turns into a scream.

END OF SESSION #2

STUDIO SESSION #3

Robert makes a ritual of setting up the iPhone in different spaces and posing as it takes an automated photo.

This goes on for a while.

He looks out at all the insignificant white boys staring at him.

White Muse is scoring the entire event. At some point Robert notices them and begins to perform for White Muse.

ROBERT

There is something so beautiful
and perverse
about knowing yourself.
That's what people see when they see my work:
A pure knowingness.
I know how I want to see a body
and so I show that,
without remark.
And you perceive my knowingness
as yours.
Because you don't know yourself.
It's that simple.
…
…
…
I didn't realize that about the reception of my work.
It's easy,
in the beginning,
to fall into the fawning
and believe you are being seen
and adored
because people are seeing the world the same way as you.
But people are constantly complicating what it is I see.
I don't like shoving shit up my ass
no one does.
But I know I like see it:
My ass swallowing something too big
at just the wrong angle

Robert moves his body in an odd, impressive angle and mimes shoving something much too big up his ass.
He takes a photo.

ROBERT

Beautiful.
...
...
That's what James doesn't understand.
How to know oneself.
The freedom
and depths of solipsism.
It's his greatest weakness as an artist.
He spends too much time
knowing others
and using that knowingness against them.
But who knows James?
Hmmm?
He imagines himself to be so very complicated.
But he's actually incredibly simple.
He's a man who cums with his eyes closed
slightly,
his lips softly muttering,
with a whimper dancing at the back of his tongue.
...

(He turns to White Muse)

When is Brunch happening?

White Muse exits to check on Brunch.
Robert picks up a bucket of Prosecco and ice.

END OF STUDIO
SESSION #3

WRITING SESSION #2

James walks down the hall towards his office.

When he enters the office we see that there are photographs of Robert and other white men everywhere.

There are post it notes scattered around his desk. On the walls above them. James picks up a Post-It and begins to furiously write: "I SEE MYSELF". He places it on the wall.

Then a scream is heard.

He looks up, in the direction of the scream and begins to laugh.

He lights a cigarette and notices Jeremy.

JAMES

There's nothing like the sound of a dinge queen screaming.
It's what they do.
They scream.
It's their little gift to us.
The black boys above and below them in bed.
A gutteral apology.
…
…
I don't even think I know how to scream anymore.
Such a performance.

He tries.

JAMES

See?
Nothing.
I'm all screamed out.

By the time you get to our age
your throat is so raw
from yelling
nothing comes out
and almost nothing can go down.
The snow queen's affliction.
Our only medicine is that which is manageable.
Only so much we can contain, right?

He laughs again.

JAMES

Don't look at me like that.
You know it's true.
That's why we love to hear them scream.
They get to become our pleasure surrogates.
Experiencing
at a level we can only imagine.
Trauma makes it difficult
to

(He moans)

So we fake it.
And watch them
and it's healing,
their

(He moans)

A scream from the gut never becomes a
song that this sings pleasure
from us.
And even if we were to scream it would scare us
as much as it would scare them
history is the only song our screams know.

James finishes his cigarette and goes back to writing.

JEREMY

Nigga, what?

James looks up.

JAMES

What?

JEREMY

That's insane.

JAMES

You've said the same thing.

JEREMY

…

JAMES

…

James goes back writing.

JEREMY

What're you working on?

JAMES

The piece I plan on completing when I go to the MacDowell Colony tomororw.

JEREMY

Giovanni's Room?

JAMES

Yes….
My homosexual tome.

JEREMY

Interesting.
I'm going to MacDowell too.

JAMES

Oh yeah?

JEREMY

Yeah.

JAMES

And what do you plan on writing?

JEREMY

"Daddy"

JAMES

Ah…

JEREMY

My black play.

JAMES

Good luck with that.

JEREMY

Why good luck?

JAMES

Once you go black…
you know the saying.
That's the trouble I'm getting into now.
No one wants a race writer to be homosexual.
And no one wants a homosexual writer to be raced.

JEREMY

Is that why David and Giovanni are white?

JAMES

…
…
…
We're all trying to pass child.
…
…
Brunch will begin in a moment.

JEREMY

I'm also writing this other thing.
You're in it.

JAMES

Oh is that so?

JEREMY

Yeah.
Here.

Jeremy points to the script in James' hand.

James looks at him and begins to get undressed.

JEREMY

...
Should I..?

(he motions to leave)

JAMES

Do you look up to me?

JEREMY

Um...yes?

JAMES

Why?

JEREMY

Because you say everything
I think.

JAMES

My daddy used to say I was the ugliest thing he'd ever seen.
Had frog eyes.
I don't have anyy reason to doubt him.

JEREMY

....
....

JAMES

Kiss me?

Jeremy backs away, disgusted.

Jeremy walks towards Brunch and begins to reciting **Giovanni, or The Snow Queen's Aria**

END OF WRITING
SESSION #2

WRITING SESSION #3

As he stares at Jeremy walking away reciting the poem. He attempts to talk over him:

JAMES

See?
You have to let the children find their way.
No truer words have been writ.
You have
to let
the children
find their way.

(He notices his next lines)

Huh...

Black Muse enters and begins to stare at him, humming to himself.

JAMES

"Insignificant White Boys,
ex love poems"

Well...

Someone is upset.
...
...
hmmm...
...
...
Giovanni, or the Snow Queen's Aria,
an Interlude
...

This one must be for me
…
…
All you see in these fading daguerreotypes is Giovanni resting his head upon a smile.
The snow queen fades,
but the dinge queen stays the same.
Luminous.
I always wondered…
when little negro boys,
hand in hand,
would line up downtown,
a nickel tucked betwist ear and fro,
waiting for their secret snap…
I always wondered
if they both smiled?
Or if one,
using the reflection off his teeth,
lent a flash to the other
so at least one could be seen.
All you see in these fading daguerreotypes is Giovanni resting his head upon a smile.
The snow queen, a panther in the dark,
the dinge queen her prey.
Or do I got that wrong?

Black Muses is fully singing in the throat now a song that has a melody but no words but all the words.

He looks to James with tears in his eyes.

JAMES

It's funny,
isn't it?
How they see you when they think they are looking in a mirror.

BLACK MUSE

What do you see when you look at me?

JAMES

Darkness
an abyss.

BLACK MUSE

When you look at yourself what do you see?

JAMES

Darkness
An abyss.

BLACK MUSE

What lives within it?

JAMES

Nothing.
Shame.
Disgust.
Fear..
Anger.
Hate.
Why do you think we're all afraid of the dark?

BLACK MUSE

Is that why you never wrote to kiss me?
Saved your words for the light.
Keep you warm.
Keep you safe.
Keep you bright.

Black Muse reaches out and kisses him, softly.

James recoils.

JAMES

It's time for brunch.

Black Muse begins to sing again.

JAMES

It's time for brunch.

James stomps away to Brunch picking up a bucket of Prosecco and ice.

END OF WRITING
SESSION #3

BRUNCH

James enters with a bottle of prosesco.

As does Robert.

Jeremy and His Friend are already seated, they were reading from INSIGNIFICANT WHITE BOYS...

WHITE MUSE is playing classical music.

ROBERT

This looks lovely.

JAMES

Thank you.

They begin to eat. In silence. Making little noises of pleasure.

ROBERT

I was thinking.

JAMES

Oh yeah?

ROBERT

We should take a trip.

JAMES

Where?

ROBERT

Berlin!

JAMES

Berlin?
What's in Berlin?

ROBERT

Freedom.
Drinks.
Boys

JAMES

Oh that sounds lovely.
Doesn't that sound lovely boys?

ROBERT

We can go stay at the Soho House.
Work on our film.

JAMES

When I get back.
Let's do it.
Why not?

JEREMY

This isn't right.

JAMES

My book will be at my publisher's and I'll need some sort of reprieve.
Perhaps we can visit Paris for a bit.
then go to your parents in London?

HIS FRIEND

No not at all.
None of this happened.

ROBERT

My parents are from Queens.
I mean Dallas.
I mean Siberia.
I mean North Carolina.
I mean South Carolina.
I mean Allentown.

HIS FRIEND

Do you even know who you're talking about?

JEREMY

Everyone is starting to bleed into each other.

JAMES

Wherever they're from.

JEREMY

Can we start over?

HIS FRIEND

Please?

JEREMY

Let's try to get this right.

The scene rewinds.

No music is played.

ROBERT

I thought you were cooking?

JAMES

This is cooking.

HIS FRIEND

I think we're fine.

JAMES

See this is fine.

ROBERT

You seem hostile.

JAMES

I'm not.

Robert takes out his camera and takes a photo.

JAMES

Can you not do that?

JEREMY

This is wrong.

JAMES

(to Robert)

You're always doing that.
I don't like it when you're doing that.

HIS FRIEND

There were more people.
And we did cook.
It was bad but we cooked.

ROBERT

And I don't like when you do this.

JAMES

It's very violent.
That thing.
How you wield it.
Constatnly taking away from me.
...
...
My spirit.

ROBERT

James you're being melodramatic once again.

Suddenly James is Elizabeth Taylor in **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?**

JAMES

You castrate with that thing.
You do know that?
You only see the parts of me you find important
and youc arve them off like some demented surgeon
and horde them,
the parts you want.

JEREMY

I feel like we were laughing before we fought.

(Everyone LAUGHS)

At least about the eggs.
We were laughing about the eggs
how bad they were
who did what?

ROBERT

Only focus on what you want me to focus on…

HIS FRIEND

They didn't start calling us George and Martha
till I got drunk
and you got drunk
and we got mean.
You think I got mean.
But we got mean.

Robert is now George from **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?**

ROBERT

You want to be castrated by me
it's the only way you're whole
because you don't know yourself as a whole entity.
You're either a negro
or your fag
you're either an artist
or an activist
You don't know how how to be it all at once.
You're fractured.
Fragmented.

JEREMY

And wasn't music playing?
Our music?

BLACK MUSE BEGINS TO SING **Trap Queen by Fetty Wap**

When you said:

ROBERT

I'm a fully sexual person
you don't even bottom.

HIS FRIEND

And we laughed

(EVERYONE LAUGHS)

and you said:

JAMES

What are you talking about?
I'm just as sexual as you
I just know what I want and what I don't want.

HIS FRIEND

And then I don't remember the transition.
(God we were so drunk...)

JEREMY

Neither do I...
(why did we drink so much?)
But somehow...
you said:

ROBERT

You'd only ever imagine letting someone piss on you.
(Or something like that...)
You'd never actually let it happen.

His Friend and White Muse stand up and unzip their pants.

As Robert stands in the middle of the brunch table and takes off his shirt.

JEREMY

And you got up and went to my shower
and stripped all the way down.
I'm skipping some things, but that's basically...
you got up

and went to my shower

JAMES

And I remember thinking
yeah
you know what!!!!
I wouldn't...
i don't want his dick
or his dick
raining down on me like some little bitchin a bad skin flick...
...
....
but why...

Robert is sitting and waiting...

His Friend can't do it.

Neither can White Muse

JEREMY

And he couldn't.
And neither could he.
So I said:

JAMES

Ill do it.

ROBERT

Not in my face.

James unzips his pants and pours prosecco on Robert's face.

END OF BRUNCH

STUDIO SESSION #5

Robert is fuming alone, except for JEREMY who stands opposite him, observing.

Robert stomps over to the shower and stands beneath the water, as soon as it hits his head it is like fire, burning his hair, burning his face, burning that inner part of him he keeps hidden.

HE SCREAMS!!!!

Later, much later.

And perhaps with a British accent:

ROBERT

WHO HERE HAS EVER BEEN PISSED ON???
HUH?
I'LL WAIT!!!

(He waits for an answer)

The thing about his dick,
that dick
black dick
is that it came close to perfection.
It felt like a dick I had dreamed up
drawn down
because it was shaped like
California.
Long but not obscene
and thick as though waiting to be embraced by a fist?
And it wasn't just shaped like California
it tasted like it too.
You know how a lot of dick can taste game-y?

Like in your mouth it tastes of something
like…
Ok when I was growing up in London,
(I mean Queens)
we lived on Marleybone High Street
and just across the street from our house there was this delicious French restaurant
Called Orrery
and Orrery is sort of renowned for their pork belly
it's one of their signature dishes
And this is one of the things I GREW UP eating
Bcause my mother wasn't a chef.
So we'd always go there.
Anyway, for my mother's birthday one year
I decided to get MAKE her the pork belly
so I went down to the market and I got some pork
and I took out my mother's dusty Julia Child's and
SLAVED over this meal for three full hours
did everything EXACTLY like the French would.
When I presented to my mother she was so excited by my presentation.
"It looks just like it Bobby!"
but then as we sat down to eat it
her smile faded
her face turned sour
"This doesn't taste of France at all.
This tastes of Sheffield."
then she spit it out.
Most American dick tastes game-y,
of the Midwest.
His dick tastes of California
A fusion dish:
salty, spicy, and dry
like wine.
Dry like California.
And my mouth can be a lake that'll never dry out.
Droughtless hole for his dick fall disappear into.

The thing about his dick
that dick
black dick is that it's the only black thing I'd ever let kill me.
We dance right up to my death every time I let it in my mouth.

That's why I'm always crying whenever I'm on my knees.
Not out of sadness
or even glee
moreso just as a recognition that this might be the end
and tears always look good with a goodbye.

Not knowing what to do, JEREMY begins to clap.

Robert looks up and over.

JEREMY

Hi.

ROBERT

Hello...

JEREMY

Um...
I'm JEREMY.

ROBERT

Ah.

JEREMY

Yeah...

ROBERT

What do you do?

JEREMY

Oh I'm an writer.

ROBERT

Really?
Me too.

JEREMY

You're a photographer though.

ROBERT

It's the same thing.
You're beautiful

JEREMY

Thank you.

Robert begins to take JEREMYs picture.

Jeremy won't let him pose him, instead he moves in all the dramatic ways he knows Robert wants him to.

He poses.

Robert snaps.

He poses.

Robert snaps.

He poses.

JEREMY

You know...
I thinks I'm like, you,
or something.

Robert continues to take his photographs.

ROBERT

Really?

JEREMY

Yes.

ROBERT

Why do you think that is...

JEREMY

I don't know.
We're both fetishists.

We both extract what we want from ppl
and give them nothing in return.
I wrote my own version of the "Black Book"

ROBERT

You did?
That's cute.

JEREMY begins to laugh.

JEREMY

Read this.

Jeremy places his script atop Robert's.

Robert sets down his camera and begins to read.

Jeremy sees the camera and begins to video tape him.

ROBERT

Insignificant White Boys
an incomplete thought: 1
This morning, while discussing Chomsky?(his relationship to Marxism,
his debates with Foucault, whether he was America's pre-eminent thinker or
merely a humanist
with wit)
you crossed my mind.
Not because you are some deep thinker
–we spent our days playing video games and getting high,
our nights fucking–
but because the conversation turned to human nature.
It's, in retrospect, unfair of me
to present you as shallow when
I never asked for depth,
only width.
("Wider"). To ask,
not command,
anything of you
would give you a chance to answer,

and you were always more
beautiful with answers behind your eyes.
That's your nature.
More humane that way.

ROBERT

…
You're getting off on this.

(He looks up)

What're you doing?

Jeremy presses play on the video he just recorded.
He watches it.
He is getting off on it.
As Robert watches in horror
Jeremy watches the video and begins to moan until he cums.

Perhaps it becomes a scream?

END OF STUDIO
SESSION #5

STUDIO SESSION #6

Robert makes a ritual of setting up the camera in different spaces and posing as it takes an automated photo.

This goes on for a while.

He looks out at all the insignificant white boys staring at him.

BLACK MUSE is there.

As Robert tries to take a photo of himself Black Muse photobombs.

Nothing else changes about the scene except Robert's internal response to Black Muse.

ROBERT

There is something so beautiful
and perverse
about knowing yourself.
That's what people see when they see my work:
A pure knowingness.
I know how I want to see a body
and so I show that,
without remark.
And you perceive my knowingness
as yours.
Because you don't know yourself.
It's that simple.
…
…
…
I didn't realize that about the reception of my work.
It's easy,

in the beginning,
to fall into the fawning
and believe you are being seen
and adored
because people are seeing the world the same way as you.
But people are constantly complicating what it is I see.
I don't like shoving shit up my ass
no one does.
But I know I like see it:
My ass swallowing somethingtoo big
at just the wrong angle

Robert moves his body in an odd, impressive angle and mimes shoving something much too big up his ass.

He takes a photo.

ROBERT

Beautiful.
...
...
That's what James doesn't understand.
How to know oneself.
The freedom
and depths of solipsism.
It's his greatest weakness as an artist.
He spends too much time
knowing others
and using that knowingness against them.
But who knows James?
Hmmm?
He imagines himself to be so very complicated.
But he's actually incredibly simple.
He's a man who cums with his eyes closed
slightly,
his lips softly muttering,
with a whimper dancing at the back of his tongue.
...
When is Brunch happening?

Robert throws his script across the room and goes to get the bottle of prosecco and ice.

END OF STUDIO
SESSION #6

WRITING SESSION #5

James walks down the hall towards his office.

When he enters the office we see that there are photographs of Robert and other white men everywhere.

James begins to furiously write.

Then a scream is heard.

He looks up, in the direction of the scream and begins to laugh, angry and sad.

He lights a cigarette and notices His Friend.

He storms over to him.

JAMES

There's nothing like the sound of a dinge queen screaming.
It's what you do.
You scream.
It's your little gift to me.
The black boy above and below you in bed.
A gutteral apology.
…
…
I don't even think I know how to scream anymore.
Such a performance.

He tries.
This is all directly to His Friend.
Perhaps they too had been lovers at one point?
He begins to touch him
Manipulate his body.

JAMES

See?
Nothing.
I'm all screamed out.
By the time you get to my age
your throat is so raw
from yelling
nothing comes out
and almost nothing can go down.
The snow queen's affliction.
My only medicine is that which is manageable.

(he grabs His Friend's dick)

Only so much I can contain, right?

He laughs again.

JAMES

Don't look at me like that.
You know it's true.
That's why I love to hear you scream.
You get to become my pleasure surrogate.
Experiencing
at a level I can only imagine.
Trauma makes it difficult
to

(He moans)

So I fake it.
And watch you
and it's healing,
your

(He moans)

A scream from the gut never becomes a
song that this sings pleasure
from me.
And even if I were to scream it would scare me
as much as it would scare you
history is the only song my screams know.

James finishes his cigarette and goes back to writing on his Post-Its.

HIS FRIEND

Nigga, what?

James looks up.

JAMES

What?

HIS FRIEND

That's insane.

JAMES

I'm not your nigga

HIS FRIEND

You've heard me say it before.

JAMES

…
I'M NOT YOUR NIGGA.
YOU'RE THE NIGGA NOW BABY.

James goes back writing.

HIS FRIEND

What're you working on?

JAMES

The piece I plan on completing when I go to the MacDowell Colony tomororw.

JEREMY

Giovanni's Room?

JAMES

Yes….
My homosexual tome.

HIS FRIEND

Interesting.
What's it about?

JAMES

You.

HIS FRIEND

Oh yeah?

JAMES

You like that?

HIS FRIEND

I could.

JAMES

You will.

HIS FRIEND

We'll see.

JAMES

Once you go black...
you know the saying.
...
I had a breakthrough:
No one wants a race writer to be homosexual.
And no one wants a homosexual writer to be raced.

HIS FRIEND

Is that why David and Giovanni are white?

JAMES

...
...
...
We're all trying to pass child.
...
...
Brunch will begin in a moment.

HI S FRIEND

How am I trying to pass?

JAMES

Don't ask dumb questions.
They are beneath you.

HIS FRIEND

...
Do you think this book will make me love you?

James looks at him and begins to write onto a post-it:

"I LOVE YOU"
He places it on His Friend's face. His Friend takes it off and reads.

HIS FRIEND

I love you.

"YOU'RE PERFECT"

HIS FRIEND

You're perfect.

"Fuck me."

HIS FRIEND

Fuck me.

"HARDER"

HIS FRIEND

Harder.

"I'M YOUR NIGGER"

HIS FRIEND

I'm your nigger.

"I'M YOUR NIGGER BB"

HIS FRIEND

I'm your nigger baby.

James is breathing heavy, tears almost in his eyes.

"Marry Me?"

HIS FRIEND

Marry me?

JAMES

No.

"PLEASE"

HIS FRIEND

Please?

JAMES

No.
You disgust me.

"I'm on my knees"

His Friend is standing.

HIS FRIEND

I'm on my knees.

James pushes him down to his knees.
"I'm on my knees"

HIS FRIEND

I'm on my knees.

JAMES

Leave.
Brunch will begin in a moment.

END OF WRITING
SESSION #5

WRITING SESSION #6

James stares at His Friend as he walks away. He yells after him:

JAMES

You have to let the children find their way.
No truer words have been writ.
You have
to let
the children
find their way.

He looks at the lines he has ahead of him. Takes a deep breath. Then he notices WHITE MUSE, who is begins to score the whole thing.

JAMES

"Insignificant White Boys,
ex love poems"

Well...

Someone is upset.
...
...
hmmm...
...
...
Giovanni, or the Snow Queen's Aria,
an Interlude
...
This one must be for me
...
...

All you see in these fading daguerreotypes is Giovanni resting his head upon a smile.
The snow queen fades,
but the dinge queen stays the same.
Luminous.
I always wondered…
when little negro boys,
hand in hand,
would line up downtown,
a nickel tucked betwist ear and fro,
waiting for their secret snap…
I always wondered
if they both smiled?
Or if one,
using the reflection off his teeth,
lent a flash to the other
so at least one could be seen.
All you see in these fading daguerreotypes is Giovanni resting his head upon a smile.
The snow queen, a panther in the dark,
the dinge queen her prey.
Or do I got that wrong?

James sets his script down and walks away.

JAMES

It's funny,
isn't it?
How they see you when they think they are looking in a mirror.

White Muse is playing intensely and laughing. They can't stop.

JAMES

It's funny,
isn't it?
How they see you when they think they are looking in a mirror.

James tries to laugh too. A flirt.

WHITE MUSE

What do you see when you look at me?

JAMES

I don't know anymore.

BLACK MUSE

When you look at yourself what do you see?

JAMES

Darkness
An abyss.

BLACK MUSE

What lives within it?

JAMES

Nothing.
Shame.
Disgust.
Fear..
Anger.
Hate.
Why do you think we're all afraid of the dark?

BLACK MUSE

I'm not.
I love the dark.
It thrills me.
The tingle in my stomach that moves up to my throat
as I inhabit any black thing
is unquantifiable.
It's the only thing Ive ever needed to know.
The thrill of my own fear.
I wasn't taught to be scared.
Afraid.
Were you?

James reaches out and kisses White Muse, softly.

White Muse smiles. White Muse picks back up his violin and begins to play again.

JAMES

It's time for brunch.

White Muse just walks away smiling.

JAMES

It's time for brunch.

James slowly walks away to Brunch picking up a bucket of Prosecco and ice.

END OF WRITING
SESSION #6

CONCLUSION

Everyone enters the space where Brunch happens. They stand in a line, no scripts in hand.

White Muse plays, the score feels like something out of the Kronos Quartet's orchestration for Darren Aronofsky's The Fountain or Requium.

ROBERT

James is sitting at Brunch as Robert enters.
Jeremy and His Friend stand and stare at them both.

HIS FRIEND

Why do you keep coming back to this?

JAMES

This is the epicenter of my disfunction
or it feels like it.

JEREMY

I have this problem.
Remember that day
we were walking back from your place
in Brooklyn
and you said:

HIS FRIEND

"I told my therapist about you"

ROBERT

"My therapist thinks you have an unhealthy relationship to boundaries.
You look at walls like they're permeable."

HIS FRIEND

"Fluid"

JAMES

That day.

JEREMY

That summer.

JAMES

I thought about it a lot.

JEREMY

When I went to MacDowell

JAMES

I was consumed by it.

JEREMY

I couldn't focus.

JAMES

I couldn't focus on writing.

JEREMY

All I could do was think about that.

JAMES

And this.

JEREMY

And everything

JAMES

And everyone before it.

JEREMY

Then a year passed.

ROBERT

You emailed me.

HIS FRIEND

You emailed me.

JEREMY

Yeah.
Because I needed to know.

JAMES

"What was the soundtrack to our co-dependent summer?"

HIS FRIEND

And I responded:
Selena Gomez's "The Heart Wants What It Wants"
As the song plays Robert begins to lip sync.

Black Muse begins to sing the song.

James watches him, rapt…until:

JAMES

And I listened to that music
and fell back into that summer.
and fell back in that world and realized.
…
…
I've been colonized by your insignificance for so long that it's all i know.
I've allowed myself to be an insignificant other
to each of you
in my home,
in my bed,
in your homes,
in your beds
and your insignificance was my favorite drug.
And I've never even allowed myself to feel the full power of it.
Too many rules.
I've allowed myself to imagine that I'm healthy because
I put out your insignificance like a half smoked cigarette
I puff on every few hours.
Why did I deny myself some sort of baptism?
Why have I clung to this deep unknowingness of myself like a medal I've earned?
Why not set up a space for myself to know myself?
Why do I sit in revelry of insignificance daily,
if I don't also thirst for insignificance?
Does anybody have some water?

Robert and His Friend pick up their bottles of Prosecco and walk over to James to relieve his thirst.

In slow motion as Jeremy does his monologue James undresses and lies down naked before Robert and His Friend as they pour prosecco into his mouth and all over his body.

The bottles becoming dicks that James fondles, sucks, and slithers beneath.

JEREMY

A HISTORY WITH WATER SPORTS:
This July, summer of 2016,
I found myself lying face up
in a bathtub
in the middle of a townhouse in Carroll Gardens.
Above me stood
seven men I'd never met
their skin illuminating
their shimmering, sweat stained insignificance
and as gold burst forth from each of their loins
I felt a tingle
that moved from my toes
to my chest
as I said:

JAMES

NOT IN MY HAIR

JEREMY

And in that tingle
I found myself
not feeling any deeper sense of knowingness
nor even a sense of insignificance
I barely felt alive
but I didn't feel dead
I just felt
a flicker of a thing
somewhere near my throat

and before I could say anything else,
I:

JAMES CUMS AND HIS PLEASURE MOVES THROUGH HIS BODY UNTIL HE SCREAMS THROUGH AN OCEAN OF PISS AND PROSECCO LIKE A MAN SLOWLY DROWNING.

THE MUSIC ENDS.

SILENCE.

PERHAPS JAMES IS DEAD?

SLOWLY EVERYONE EXITS.

FIRST JAMES.

THEN ROBERT.

THEN JEREMY

WHITE MUSE

BLACK MUSE

ALL THAT'S LEFT IS HIS FRIEND, WHO MOVES TO LEAVE BEFORE:

HIS FRIEND

Perhaps I read too much into your play,
but
I've been musing on the last speech you made,
and it may or may not be directly related to you and I,
but if it is,
I hope you know that you were never an
'insignificant other'
and I hope that you don't see our time together that summer
as something in any way fetishized or un-special...

I guess the play did take me by surprise as it is,
I suspect,
partly (albeit a small part)
a comment on the change in our dynamic as friends
which was very interesting to deconstruct on that level for me.
I guess I just wanted to say sorry if you did feel marginalized in those last weeks of that summer.
I may well be projecting here of course,
but I did walk away from the play feeling like the whole thing
was an elaborate read on me in some way,
but that's probably because I'm very egotistical
and think everything is about me,
when in fact,
I am just an insignificant white boy.
Either way,
Either way,
Either way,
Either way,
Either way,
Either way,
Either way,
I
I
I
I
I
I
I
I
I
I
I want you to know when I look in the mirror I see myself.

END OF PLAY